

NEWS RELEASE

National Gallery of Art  
Washington, D. C.

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WASHINGTON, May 13: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announces the opening on May 14th of a special photographic exhibition, "Fine Arts Under Fire, " illustrating the work of the Allied Armies in preserving and salvaging historic monuments and works of art in the combat areas of Western Europe. The exhibition, prepared by the Editors of LIFE Magazine, in collaboration with the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas, consists of thirty panels of photographs, many hitherto unpublished, assembled from several sources. It will be on view through Sunday, June 2nd and will thereafter circulate in the United States and South America.

A short running text accompanies the photographs and gives a coherent picture of the problems concerning the care of fine arts during the war, and the methods, extent and variety of the work carried on under the little-known program, unique in the history of war, for the protection and salvage of the cultural heritage of Europe.

Beginning with a few examples of the extent and type of damage to historic buildings during the war, the exhibition emphasises the application of the Allied program for the protection of those monuments within the limits of military necessity, for the saving of whatever remained of war-damaged buildings and collections, and the handling of dispersed and looted works of art. Specialist Monuments,



Fine Arts and Archives officers, who were attached to the Armies to carry out the program, are shown at work in Italy, France, Belgium and Germany, inspecting and assessing damage, directing salvage of fragments for reconstruction, rescuing statues, objects, books and archives from rubble and exposure, taking measures to prevent further deterioration to damaged buildings, and to frescoes, such as those of the Campo Santo at Pisa, are illustrated. The latter part of the exhibition deals with the discovery in Germany of the repositories of works of art pillaged by the Germans from the countries of Europe or removed from German cities for safekeeping. There were nearly 700 such repositories in the U.S. Zone alone, so that the magnitude and detail of the Army's problem can only be suggested here. Specialist officers are, for example, shown packing for its return to Belgium the world famous Michelangelo Madonna and Child from Bruges, found in a salt mine in the Austrian Tyrol, and evacuating under combat conditions the Goering Collection abandoned at Berchtesgaden during the last days of the war.